

News Release

For Immediate Release

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24 Counties and 1 Reservation Declared Primary Natural Disaster Areas

Bozeman, MT – The Secretary of Agriculture has designated 24 Montana counties as primary natural disaster areas. The designated counties include: Big Horn, Blaine, Broadwater, Carbon, Carter, Custer, Daniels, Dawson, Garfield, Golden Valley, Hill, McCone, Phillips, Powder River, Prairie, Richland, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Teton, Valley, and Yellowstone and the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. Under the designation, all qualified producers within the above named counties are eligible for low interest emergency loans from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA). The designation only triggers the Emergency Loan Program, it does not trigger other disaster programs administered by FSA.

The designation comes from losses in the above named counties due to natural disasters such as drought, wildfires, severe storms, strong winds, hail, tornadoes, late frost and grasshoppers. The loan limit is up to 100 percent of calculated losses not to exceed the maximum indebtedness of \$500,000. The current annual interest rate is 3.75 percent.

Emergency loan funds help cover production and physical losses in association with the natural disaster. To be eligible, producers must show a production loss of 30 percent over the last three-year average; be unable to obtain commercial credit; and must be able to show sufficient repayment ability. The deadline to apply for 2006 losses varies by county, please check with your local FSA office for accurate deadline dates.

Producers in eligible counties have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for loans to help cover part of their actual losses. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability.

For further information or additional questions, contact your local FSA office or logon to the Montana FSA website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt>.